

**AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS**

**This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:**

**LISTING OF CLAIMS:**

Please cancel claims 1-11 and add the following new claims:

12. (New) A method of processing postal items in which an image is formed of each item in a sorting machine, the image including address information, and on the basis of the image of the item and a reference address base, OCR is used to perform automatic recognition of the destination address information to forward each item towards a sorting output of the sorting machine, and in which if said destination address for a current mail item is not recognized unambiguously, said method comprises the steps of:

identifying several delivery points from results of said recognition processing for said current mail item, said delivery points corresponding to different ambiguous solutions of said recognition processing results;

detecting if said delivery points are included in a single delivery round by querying a database recording several ordered lists of delivery points corresponding respectively to several delivery rounds,

in response to said detection, computing a volume mail data for delivery range of said single delivery round and comparing said volume mail data to a threshold value to forward said mail item towards a sorting output.

13. A method of processing postal items in which an image is formed of each item in a sorting machine, the image including address information, and on the basis of the image of the item and a reference address base, OCR is used to perform automatic recognition of the destination address information to forward each item towards a sorting output of the sorting machine, and in which if said destination address for a current mail item is not recognized unambiguously, the method comprises the steps of:

identifying from results of said recognition processing several delivery points corresponding to different ambiguous solutions of said recognition processing;

computing several cumulated extra cost values of destination error from said several delivery points, each cumulated extra cost value of destination error for a current delivery point being computed from an accumulation of cost values representing extra costs of destination error if said current mail item is delivered respectively to each one of said other delivery points instead to said current delivery point,

identifying a smallest extra cost cumulated value among said computed cumulated extra cost values and comparing said smallest cumulated extra cost value to a threshold value to forward said mail item towards a sorting output.

14. A system for processing postal items, the system comprising a camera for forming an image of each item, the image including address information, and a data processor unit that performs automatic recognition of destination address information by OCR on the basis of the image of the item and a reference address base, the system being characterized in that it further

comprises a database having organized therein ordered lists of delivery points by delivery rounds, in that that the processor unit is arranged to:

identifying several delivery points from results of said recognition processing for said current mail item, said delivery points corresponding to different ambiguous solutions of said recognition processing results;

detecting if said delivery points are included in a single delivery round by querying a database recording several ordered lists of delivery points corresponding respectively to several delivery rounds,

in response to said detection, computing a volume mail data for delivery range of said single delivery round and comparing said volume mail data to a threshold value to forward said mail item towards a sorting output.

15. A system for processing postal items, the system comprising a camera for forming an image of each item, the image including address information, and a data processor unit that performs automatic recognition of destination address information by OCR on the basis of the image of the item and a reference address base, the system being characterized in that it further comprises a database having recorded cost values representing extra costs of destination error associated with processing a mail item if it is delivered respectively to a wrong delivery office, to a wrong delivery round and to a wrong delivery point, in that that the processor unit is arranged to:

identifying from results of said recognition processing several delivery points corresponding to different ambiguous solutions of said recognition processing;

computing several cumulated extra cost values of destination error from said several delivery points, each cumulated extra cost value of destination error for a current delivery point being computed from an accumulation of cost values representing extra costs of destination error if said current mail item is delivered respectively to each one of said other delivery points instead to said current delivery point,

identifying a smallest extra cost cumulated value among said computed cumulated extra cost values and comparing said smallest cumulated extra cost value to a threshold value to forward said mail item towards a sorting output.

16. A postal sorting machine including a system for processing mail items comprising a camera for forming an image of each item, the image including address information, and a data processor unit that performs automatic recognition of destination address information by OCR on the basis of the image of the item and a reference address base, the system being characterized in that it further comprises a database having organized therein ordered lists of delivery points by delivery rounds, in that that the processor unit is arranged to:

identifying several delivery points from results of said recognition processing for said current mail item, said delivery points corresponding to different ambiguous solutions of said recognition processing results;

detecting if said delivery points are included in a single delivery round by querying a database recording several ordered lists of delivery points corresponding respectively to several delivery rounds,

in response to said detection, computing a volume mail data for delivery range of said single delivery round and comparing said volume mail data to a threshold value to forward said mail item towards a sorting output.